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ABSTRACT

A study was done to determine the extent to which effectiveness among a nationally representative sample of two-year colleges differs in terms of their dominant type of organizational culture. The study was based on a survey of 1,332 faculty and administrators in 30 colleges. Of these, 662 usable responses were received. Analysis yielded the following distribution of dominant culture types among the 30 colleges: clan (n=10), adhocracy (n=7), hierarchy (n=10), and market (n=3). Clan cultures emphasize shared values, goals, and the development of human resources; adhocracy emphasizes entrepreneurship, growth, and adaptability; hierarchy emphasizes the norms and values associated with bureaucracy (order and uniformity); and market cultures emphasize competitiveness, environmental interaction, and customer orientation. The findings demonstrated wide differences in effectiveness, and the differences were consistent with the colleges' conceptual rationale. The perceived effectiveness of two-year colleges was strongly related to their dominant organizational culture types when controlling for size and level of financial difficulty. Colleges with the adhocracy culture were perceived to be the most effective while clan or market culture colleges occupied a mid-range. Included are 2 tables and 27 references. (JB)

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

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This paper was presented at the Thirty-Second Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Atlanta Hilton & Towers, Atlanta, Georgia, May 10-13, 1992. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Abstract

The central purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the effectiveness of a nationally representative sample of two-year colleges differs in terms of their dominant type of organizational culture. The findings demonstrate wide differences in the effectiveness of two-year colleges that exhibit the traits of clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market cultures, and the differences are consistent with their conceptual rational. The research, policy, and practical implications of the findings in terms of our efforts to understand and improve the management and institutional performance of two-year colleges are discussed.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Organizational culture is an essential construct in contemporary efforts to improve managerial and organizational performance (Ouchi, 1981; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Schein (1985) explains that the centrality of culture in these efforts is due to its capacity to solve the "basic problems of (1) organizational survival in and adaptation to the external environment and (2) integration of internal processes to insure the capacity to continue to survive and adapt" (p.50). Culture contributes to the solution of external adaptation issues through providing consensus about mission and strategy, operational goals, means, performance criteria, and remedial and repair strategies, and to the solution of internal integration issues through providing consensus about language, conceptual categories, group boundaries, and explanations of the unexplainable, as well as criteria for differentiation of influence and power (i.e., stratification), intimacy (i.e., peer relationships), and the allocation of rewards and punishments (Schein, 1985, pp. 52-82).

Most research on organizational cultures in colleges and universities embraces either a sociological or a cultural anthropological perspective grounded primarily in in-depth interview and participant observation methodological traditions (e.g., Clark, 1970; London, 1978; Chaffee and Tierney, 1988; Tierney, 1991). Psychologists, on the other hand, rely primarily on survey research methodology grounded in Jung's (1923) "psychological archetypes" and Quinn's (1988) competing values model to conduct their analyses of organizational culture. Embedded in these two streams of research is an obvious tradeoff between the rich, in-depth qualitative analyses of a single or few organizations by sociologists and anthropologists versus the multiple, comparative observations from survey research conducted by psychologists.

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) sought to blend these two research traditions through the development of an instrument, the Institutional Performance Survey (IPS), that measures the organizational cultures of colleges and universities with written descriptions of cultural scenarios based on Jung's psychological archetypes and Quinn's competing values framework, rather than conventional Likert-type attitude survey items (Krakower and Niwa, 1985). The scenarios that are the basis of the IPS organizational culture scales serve as "word pictures" that "help respondents convey not just the extent to which they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their organization (climate) but the core values and orientations that characterize it (its culture)" (Cameron and Ettington, 1988, p. 375).

There is consistent empirical evidence supporting the validity of the four dominant organizational culture types that evolve from responses to the IPS cultural scenarios. For example, colleges and universities with *clan* cultures evidence high morale and collegial decision-making styles, those with *adhocracy* cultures employ innovative strategies and boundary spanning activities, those with *hierarchy* cultures possess mechanistic structures and lack slack resources, and those with *market* cultures are proactive and adopt strong market initiatives (Cameron and Ettington, 1988). Similarly supportive evidence is provided by Zammuto and Krakower (1991) who report that the IPS organizational culture scales are correlated with measures of organizational characteristics (e.g., centralization), climate (e.g., trust, morale), and strategy orientations (e.g., reactive, proactive) in a manner that generally fits the predictions of the underlying conceptual frameworks. For example, the degree to which colleges and universities evidence a *hierarchy* culture is positively related to centralization and reactive strategic orientations and negatively related to trust, morale, and leader credibility. They conclude that "it is possible to develop a valid survey instrument to study organizational culture" since their results, using the IPS, "met the criteria of internal consistency, predictable relationships with other organizational phenomena, and discrimination among groups" (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991, p. 109).

The virtual absence of empirical research on the relationship between organizational culture and effectiveness in the higher education community has been noted by many writers (e.g., Chait, 1982; Dill, 1982; Masland, 1985; Zammuto and Krakower, 1991). The effectiveness of colleges and universities is no doubt a function of both powerful forces in the external environment and strong forces that emanate from within these institutions. Cameron (1986) concludes, from an exhaustive analysis of dozens of predictors of organizational effectiveness, that the most powerful factors associated with effectiveness in colleges and universities tend to be internal factors under the control of campus officials and provides compelling evidence that institutions "may be effective ... in spite of their environments" (p.107). Similarly, Cameron and Tschirhart (1992) demonstrate that certain internal management strategies and decision processes (e.g., domain offensive strategies and participative and political decision processes) seem to mitigate the effects of negative external environmental attributes (e.g., increasing competition, unpredictability, turbulence, and decline) in institutions of higher learning. Chaffee and Tierney (1988) echo the claims of Schein (1985) in their suggestion that the single most fundamental construct in the internal dynamics of a college or university is its culture and suggest that "our lack of understanding about the role of organizational culture in improving management and institutional performance inhibits our ability to address the challenges that face higher education" (p. 8).

Cameron and Ettington (1988) found a clear relationship between the dominant culture type of four-year colleges and universities and the effectiveness of these institutions. For example, four-year institutions manifesting the attributes of a *clan* culture are more effective in promoting higher levels of internal morale among students, faculty, and staff, those exhibiting the characteristics of an *adhocracy* culture are more successful in their efforts to adapt to the external environment, and those reflecting the *market* culture are most successful in their ability to acquire necessary resources. The guiding purpose of the current study is to determine the extent to which the effectiveness of two-year colleges differs in terms of their dominant organizational culture type. This topic is particularly acute in two-year colleges since they comprise the single largest sector of American higher education with over 1,200 institutions serving more than five million students and face continual challenges about their effectiveness (Nunley and Breneman, 1988; Brint and Karabel, 1989; McGrath and Spear, 1991).

Research Procedures

Sample

The sample was selected using a two-stage stratified random sample design. The first stage was based on a random selection of public two-year colleges stratified according to size using the 1990 membership directory of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC). Thirty institutions were randomly selected and their college catalogues were inspected to obtain the names of administrators and faculty members. The second stage was based on a sample of all full-time administrators and a random sample of faculty members. Approximately twice as many faculty were sampled as administrators at each college. A total of 1,332 faculty and administrators in these 30 community colleges were surveyed and 698 responses (54%) were received. Thirty-six surveys were deleted due to excessive missing data, leaving a total of 662 (51.3%) responses used in the analyses described below.

Variables

The survey instrument included 36 items regarding the effectiveness of two-year colleges. Thirty-two of the items were taken from the IPS instrument developed by the Organizational Studies Division at NCHEMS (Krakower and Niwa, 1985). There were minor word changes in five of the original thirty-two items to make them more appropriate for use

with two-year institutions. Four additional items were added from Cameron's (1978) original instrument. Prior research findings confirm that these thirty-six items measure nine distinct dimensions of organizational effectiveness in two-year colleges (Smart and Hamm, 1991; Hamm, 1992) in a manner consistent with Cameron's (1978; 1981; 1986) findings on four-year institutions. Table 1 presents operational definitions of and reliability estimates for the nine organizational effectiveness dimensions used in this study.

Insert Table 1 about here

The survey instrument also included measures of the dominant organizational culture type of two-year colleges using the original IPS scales (Krakower and Niwa, 1985). These scales consisted of brief scenarios that reflect the dominant characteristics of four types of organizational cultures (clans, adhocracies, hierarchies, and market). Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which their colleges exhibited characteristics related to each of the four culture types along four dimensions: institutional character, institutional leader, institutional cohesion, and institutional emphases Respondents' scores were calculated by averaging ratings for each culture type across the four dimensions. The profile for each of the thirty two-year colleges was then obtained by averaging each of the four scores across respondents from each college. The dominant culture type of each college was determined by inspecting the highest culture scale score of each college based upon the aggregate responses of all respondents from the college. These procedures yielded the following distribution of dominant culture types among the thirty two-year colleges included in this study: *clan* (n=10), *adhocracy* (n=7), *hierarchy* (n=10), and *market* (n=3).

Clan cultures emphasize shared values, goals, and the development of human resources. Their interactions with the external environment are characterized by reactive, implementor-type strategies. Internal transactions are guided by congruence of beliefs, trust, and tradition.The leader is generally considered to be a mentor, a sage, or a father or mother figure. *Adhocracy* cultures emphasize entrepreneurship, growth, and adaptability. Their interactions with the external environment are characterized by proactive, innovative, prospector-type strategies and boundary spanning activities. Internal transactions are guided by a commitment to innovation and the importance or ideological appeal of the task being undertaken. The leader is generally considered to be an entrepreneur, an innovator, or a risk taker. *Hierarchy* cultures emphasize the norms and values associated with bureaucracy (e.g., order, uniformity). Their interactions with the external environment are characterized by reactive, defender-type strategies. Internal transactions are governed by formally stated roles and enforced through rules and regulations. The leader is generally considered to be a coordinator, an organizer, or an administrator. *Market* cultures emphasize competitiveness, environmental interaction, and customer orientation. Their interactions with the external environment are characterized by proactive, market-oriented initiatives. Internal transactions are governed by beliefs that competent performance directed toward desired organizational outcomes will be rewarded (i.e., equitable exchange and market mechanisms). The leader is generally considered to be a producer, a technician, or a hard-driver.

These four cultural categories are theoretical or "ideal" types and it is highly unlikely that any college will reflect only one culture; rather, they are likely to be comprised of varying mixtures of all four types. Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that the effectiveness of organizations varies in terms of their dominant culture type (Ouchi, 1981; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Cameron and Ettington, 1988).

Respondents also provided information on the extent to which their colleges were experiencing financial difficulties. The level of financial difficulty experienced by the college

was measured by two items to which respondents indicated their agreement on a four-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree"; 4 = "Strongly agree"). The two items were: "Financial resources have become more difficult to obtain in the last year" and "Revenue for the college, adjusted for inflation, decreased over the last year." These two items were combined (coefficient alpha=.84) to create a composite scale of the level of financial difficulty experienced by the respective colleges during the past year. The size of all institutions (i.e., headcount enrollment) was obtained from the 1990 AACJC membership directory.

Analyses

Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) procedures were used to examine variation in the nine organizational effectiveness measures of two-year colleges with decidedly different cultures. A oneway MANCOVA design was employed. The independent variable was the dominant culture type of each two-year college (i.e., *clan*, *adhocracy*, *hierarchy*, and *market*). The dependent variables were the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness defined in Table 1. The covariates were two measures reflecting the size of the college and the extent to which the college has experienced financial difficulties in the past year. These covariates were included in the analysis given extant findings that the effectiveness of colleges and universities is negatively related to their *size* and to the magnitude of *financial problems* they experience (Cameron and Tschirhart, 1992; Hamm, 1989; Smart, 1989).

Results

The homogeneity of regression test was not statistically significant (Wilk's lambda=.95; $F=1.22$, $p>.05$), indicating that the effects of the covariates (size, financial difficulties) on the nine dependent variables are the same for each of the four dominant organizational culture types. Thus, subsequent differences in the effectiveness of two-year colleges on the basis of their dominant organizational culture type are not conditional on the size or extent of financial difficulties of the institutions. The MANCOVA test of the within-cells regression effect was statistically significant (Wilk's lambda=.81; $F=7.80$; $p<.001$), thus the respondents' scores on the nine organizational effectiveness dimensions were adjusted to control for differences associated with the covariates (i.e., size, financial difficulties). The organizational culture main effect was statistically significant (Wilk's lambda=.75; $F=7.12$; $p<.001$) indicating that there are broad differences in the respondents' perceptions of organizational effectiveness across the four groups of two-year colleges when controlling for differences in their size and the degree of financial difficulty they are experiencing. Table 2 presents the adjusted means and standard deviations for the four groups of colleges on the nine organizational effectiveness dimensions.

Insert Table 2 about here

The organizational culture main effect produced statistically significant differences on all nine effectiveness dimensions. Two-year colleges with a dominant *adhocracy* culture have significantly higher adjusted mean scores than the three other groups on Student Educational Satisfaction, Student Career Development, Ability to Acquire Resources, and Student Personal Development; those with either an *adhocracy* or a *market* culture have significantly higher adjusted mean scores on System Openness and Community Interaction, and Student Academic Development; those with either an *adhocracy* or a *clan* culture have significantly higher adjusted mean scores on Professional Development & Quality of Faculty; and those with a dominant *clan* culture have higher adjusted mean scores on Organizational Health and Faculty & Administrator Employment Satisfaction. Two-year colleges with a *hierarchy* culture have the lowest adjusted mean score on seven of the nine effectiveness dimensions.

Discussion

The global findings of this study clearly demonstrate that the perceived effectiveness of two-year colleges is strongly related to their dominant organizational culture type when controlling for their size and level of financial difficulty. This straightforward finding is evident in the fact that their are statistically significant differences among the four dominant culture types on all nine organizational effectiveness dimensions. From a global perspective it appears that two-year colleges with a dominant *adhocracy* culture are clearly perceived to be the most effective since they have the highest or second highest adjusted mean score on all nine effectiveness dimensions. Two-year colleges with a dominant *clan* or *market* culture appear to occupy a mid-range position given that the former has the highest or second highest adjusted mean score on four effectiveness dimensions and the latter has the highest or second highest adjusted mean score on three dimensions. Clearly, two-year colleges with a dominant *hierarchy* culture occupy the least favorable position in that they have the lowest adjusted mean score on seven of the nine effectiveness dimensions.

Cameron and Ettington (1988) similarly reported significant differences among four equivalent dominant culture types on all nine organizational effectiveness dimensions in their sample of 334 four-year institutions. A comparison of their findings with those obtained in this study suggests that, in general, *there is strong consistency in the manner by which organizational effectiveness is related to culture in both two-year and four-year institutions*. For example, there is perfect correspondence between the dominant culture type with the highest mean score on six of the nine effectiveness dimensions for both two-year and four-year institutions. In both the Cameron and Ettington (1988) study and the current study, institutions with a dominant *adhocracy* culture have the highest mean score on System Openness & Community Interaction, Professional Development & Quality of Faculty, Student Career Development, and Student Personal Development[1], while those with a dominant *clan* culture have the highest mean score on Organizational Health and Faculty & Administrator Employment Satisfaction.

This general pattern of comparable findings between two-year and four-year institutions similarly exists with slight differences on the three organizational effectiveness dimensions in which the results of the current study are not exactly the same as those reported by Cameron and Ettington (1988). *In each instance, the dominant culture type with the highest score for two-year colleges has the second highest score in Cameron and Ettington's (1988) findings for four-year institutions*. For example, Cameron and Ettington (1988) found that four-year institutions with a dominant *clan* culture have the highest mean score on Student Educational Satisfaction, and two-year colleges with a *clan* culture have the second highest mean score on this dimension in the current study. This general pattern is also true for the Ability to Acquire Resources and Student Personal Development effectiveness dimensions. *Thus on all nine dimensions there is high comparability in the manner by which organizational effectiveness is related to the dominant culture in both two-year and four-year institutions.*

The strong organizational effectiveness profiles of two-year colleges with dominant *adhocracy* or *market* cultures noted above, especially the former, is informative since these two cultures share a strong external orientation manifested in an emphasis on external positioning, long-term time frames, and achievement oriented activities (e.g., competitive actions), as opposed to *clan* or *hierarchy* cultures that share a prevailing internal orientation manifested in an emphasis on internal maintenance, short-term orientation, and smoothing activities (e.g., tension reduction). In addition, the strong effectiveness profiles of two-year colleges with *adhocracy* or *market* cultures are consistent with Cameron's (1986) findings on four-year colleges and universities that "proactive managerial strategies and those with an external emphasis are more successful than are reactive strategies and those oriented toward internal institutional affairs" (p. 108).

Schein (1985) suggests that culture influences organizational effectiveness through its capacity to contribute to the solution of both external adaptation and internal integration issues. The findings of the present study suggest that the benefits that accrue to a two-year college with a culture that is externally-oriented and that embraces a proactive strategic orientation (e.g., adhocracy, market) are related to its successful resolution of both external adaptation and internal integration issues. For example, two-year colleges with an *adhocracy* culture would appear to have experienced greater success in their resolution of external adaptation issues through their greater capacity to successfully interact with, adapt to, and serve the external environment (e.g., System Openness & Community Interaction, Student Career Development) and to secure the necessary resources from the external environment for their effective functioning (e.g., Ability to Acquire Resources). Similarly, their success in the resolution of internal integration issues is apparent in their greater capacity to promote both student and faculty growth and development (e.g., Student Educational Satisfaction, Student Personal Development, Student Academic Development, Professional Development & Quality of Faculty).

A college culture with a strong internal orientation (e.g., clan) is not without benefits, however, those benefits would appear to be restricted to issues of internal integration. For example, two-year colleges with a dominant *clan* culture are more effective in terms of the smooth functioning of their internal processes and operations (i.e., Organizational Health) and the job satisfaction of their faculty and administrative staff members (i.e., Faculty & Administrator Employment Satisfaction). These findings suggest that the strong internal orientation of clan cultures, and their emphasis on interpersonal relations, contributes to higher levels of morale and the reduction of conflicts and friction among faculty and professional staff members.

The specific culture that is best for specific two-year colleges is a matter of institutional choice. The findings of this study suggest, however, that that choice might well influence the ultimate effectiveness of the institutions, and campus leaders may want to consider modifications of the prevailing campus culture in an efforts to enhance institutional performance. For example, two-year colleges experiencing difficulties in interactions with their external environments may want to move toward the primary attributes of an adhocracy culture, while those institutions experiencing problems with internal integration issues may want to move toward the salient features of a clan culture.

Successful efforts to manage or change organizational cultures are obviously very complex. Nonetheless, the findings of this study and those of Cameron and Ettington (1988) clearly suggest that the effectiveness of two-year and four-year colleges and universities is highly related to their dominant culture type. Thus, the management and change of that culture are paramount responsibilities of college leaders. Schein (1985) suggests that "culture and leadership ... are two sides of the same coin" and contends that "the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture" (p.2). He provides an extensive discussion of twelve mechanisms that have been employed successfully to change organizational cultures depending on the growth stages of the organizations (pp.270-296). Lundberg (1985) provides a conceptual framework to understand the process of cultural change that is grounded in organizational learning theory and incorporates internal and external contingencies that facilitate and hinder efforts to intervene in the culture change cycle. These are but two of numerous sources to which college leaders can turn for assistance in their efforts to develop knowledge about the complex process by which organizational cultures may be managed and changed. What is becoming abundantly clear, however, is that efforts to improve managerial and institutional performance must incorporate a fundamental appreciation of the management of academic cultures in addition to the contemporary trend toward the adoption of management tools originally developed in market-based businesses (e.g., strategic planning, marketing, cost accounting mechanisms) as suggested a decade ago by Dill (1982).

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Table 1

Definitions of Organizational Effectiveness Dimensions

Student Educational Satisfaction (SES): The extent of students' satisfaction with their educational experiences at the institution. Reliability=.80

Student Academic Development (SAD): The extent of academic attainment, growth, and progress made by students at the institution, and the opportunities provided by the institution for academic growth. Reliability=.62

Student Career Development (SCD): The extent of occupational or vocational development of students and the opportunities for occupational development provided by the institution. Reliability=.67

Student Personal Development (SPD): The extent of student development in noncareer, nonacademic areas, that is, socially, culturally, emotionally, and the opportunities provided by the institution for personal development. Reliability=.69

Faculty and Administrator Employment Satisfaction (FAES): The satisfaction of faculty members and administrators with their employment and jobs at the institution. Reliability=.76

Professional Development and Quality of the Faculty (PDQF): The extent of professional attainment and development of the faculty, and the amount of stimulation toward professional development provided by the institution. Reliability=.74

System Openness and Community Interaction (SOCI): The emphasis placed on the interaction with, adaptation to, and service in the institution's external environment. Reliability=.72

Ability to Acquire Resources (AAR): The extent to which the institution acquires resources from the external environment including finances, high quality students and faculty, research support, and political legitimacy. Reliability=.77

Organizational Health (OH): The extent of smooth functioning of the institution in terms of its processes and operations, including the benevolence and vitality of the institution. Reliability=.82

Table 2

Adjusted Means and Standard Deviations of Dominant Culture Types

Effectiveness Dimensions	Dominant Culture Types			
	Clan	Adhocracy	Hierarchy	Market
Student Educational Satisfaction	.087 (.817)	.193 (.745)	-.316 (.929)	.056 (.712)
Student Academic Development	.034 (.788)	.099 (.687)	-.194 (.841)	.116 (.672)
Student Career Development	-.186 (.796)	.132 (.507)	.086 (.771)	.043 (.535)
Student Personal Development	.022 (.823)	.128 (.728)	-.148 (.803)	-.002 (.735)
Faculty & Administrator Employment Satisfaction	.165 (.767)	-.004 (.796)	-.095 (.772)	-.196 (.785)
Professional Development & Quality of the Faculty	.058 (.745)	.135 (.770)	-.196 (.719)	-.009 (.650)
System Openness & Community Interaction	.003 (.769)	.305 (.656)	-.406 (.848)	.230 (.637)
Ability to Acquire Resources	-.088 (.816)	.215 (.784)	-.100 (.855)	.113 (.734)
Organizational Health	.172 (.677)	.027 (.773)	-.197 (.668)	-.095 (.755)

* Standard deviations are in parenthesis.